

# The City Grapevine

December '04/January'05



## First Street Redevelopment

In order to provide more direct communication about the redevelopment of First Street, Mayor Klinkhamer formed a Blue Ribbon Committee of 36 residents. These residents have a broad demographic makeup and are dispersed throughout the community. The group expressed strong support for the project, although many also voiced concerns.

### Why is it necessary to relocate The Manor, ZaZa's and Vi's?

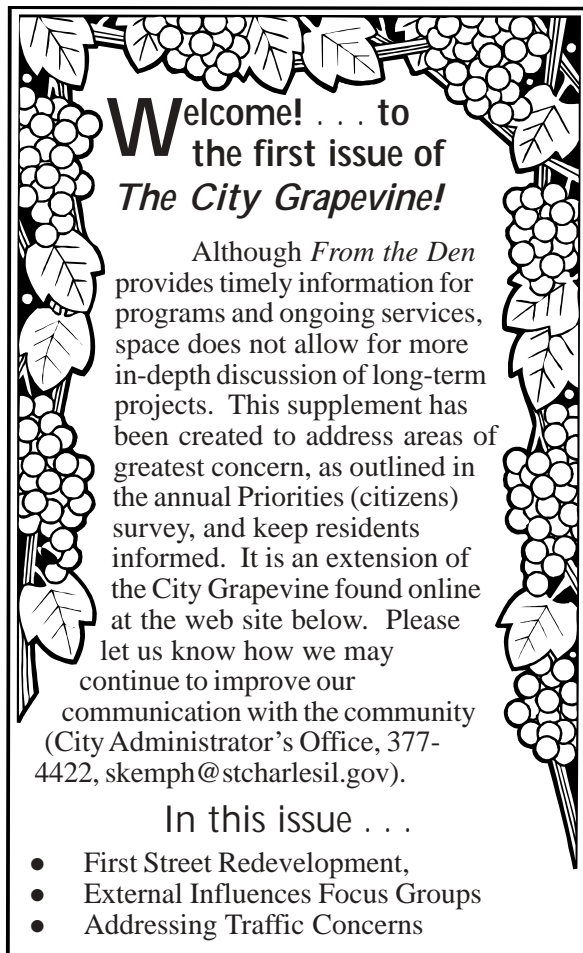
This is a question that was discussed in last month's publication and was raised as a concern by some members of the Blue Ribbon Committee. As stated last month, the City and developer would like to see these businesses relocated within the project on First Street, should they wish. Critical to the success of this project is the widening of First Street (which will allow for on-street parking), an attractive gateway to the First Street area, access to the riverfront, public plazas and right-of-way improvements. These objectives cannot be realized without the relocation of these businesses.

A spokesman for the development group told the committee why acquiring certain properties was critical to First Street's success. They compared the concept to a shopping mall, where visibility and creating a "critical mass" of shopping experiences are the two vital components to attracting customers. In this concept, a mall provides the nucleus; the combination of the mall and commerce centers surrounding the mall create the critical mass to make the entire project a success. Neither a mall nor the surrounding commerce will succeed independent and apart from each other. First Street would require the same elements--strong

visibility and an appropriate mix of retail, service and residential--in order to be successful while maintaining the uniqueness and character of a traditional downtown. Public access to the Fox River at the entrance point to First Street will be essential for the visibility element. First Street itself will provide the nucleus element, and its combination with the remainder of the downtown will ensure the viability of both.

The attorney representing the City on eminent domain matters discussed the process used for eminent domain with the Blue Ribbon Committee:

- The first step is to complete an appraisal of the property.
- An ordinance authorizing a good faith offer letter is passed by the City Council (although discussions typically commence prior to that time).
- A good faith offer is made based on the appraised value of the property.
- The property owner is asked to respond within a specific number of days (typically 15-30).
- Negotiations begin with the property owner as soon as possible.



**Welcome! . . . to  
the first issue of  
*The City Grapevine!***

Although *From the Den* provides timely information for programs and ongoing services, space does not allow for more in-depth discussion of long-term projects. This supplement has been created to address areas of greatest concern, as outlined in the annual Priorities (citizens) survey, and keep residents informed. It is an extension of the City Grapevine found online at the web site below. Please let us know how we may continue to improve our communication with the community (City Administrator's Office, 377-4422, skemph@stcharlesil.gov).

**In this issue . . .**

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- The eminent domain complaint may be filed with the court any time after the good faith offer period expires.
- If negotiations fail, which is rare, the case may proceed to court, where, after hearing testimony from experts for both sides, it will decide a fair value for the property. This process takes from 12 to 18 months.

### What is the timeframe?

This project could be divided into four phases:

**Phase I – Land Acquisition.** Approximately 70% of the land for the project has already been or will be purchased by the end of November.

**Phase II – Redevelopment Agreement.** The redevelopment agreement spells out the terms of the development. It outlines the developer's and City's obligations with regard to who will be responsible for each component of the project, financial incentives and timing. *This phase could take 4 to 6 months.*

**Phase III – Planning and Zoning.** The City's Historic Preservation Commission, Plan Commission and the City Council will review the project. *This phase is estimated to require 4 to 6 months to complete.*

**Phase IV – Final Design and Permitting Phase (Engineering and Architecture).** Several City departments will work with the developer as they complete their final design to ensure that the design is in compliance with the building codes. *It is estimated that this phase could take 9 to 12 months.*

### What is *not* going to happen on First Street?

One of the Blue Ribbon participants indicated that there is a great deal of misinformation spread around the community as rumors circulate. He suggested that the City counter these rumors with statements about what is **not** going to happen. Although some may have ideas on what would be best to locate in this critical area, the City must look at many factors that will affect the entire community. More communication is essential to taking a pro-active approach to better informing the community on this project, dispelling incorrect rumors, and helping people understand the decisions made by the City. We plan to publish these supplements in every City newsletter issue and post more information on the City web site as it becomes available.

## External Influences Focus Groups

Eleven focus groups were held in September and October to discuss what the City needs to focus on to maintain or improve quality of life while the world around us changes. We had a total of 117 residents, youth, business owners, social service representatives and realtors attend the focus groups and provide input. This was also the first focus group series with our new Community Facilitators. Jane Creen, Community Facilitator and the topic coordinator, presented the results of the focus groups to the Government Operations Committee on November 1. The results were also discussed at the November 6 City Council retreat, when elected officials and department directors gathered to discuss long-term plans and priorities. The results have also been distributed to the School, Park and Library Districts for their review and information.

Additional follow-up on actions stemming from these focus groups will be included in future issues of this supplement. Please contact the City Administrator's Office at 377-4422/skempf@stcharlesil.gov with questions or for more information on the Focus on St. Charles program.

## Addressing Traffic Concerns

St. Charles is blessed with three state routes (IL 64, 25 and 31), two major County routes (Kirk and Randall Roads) and one geographic impediment (the Fox River). The economic vitality of our downtown, industrial areas, and commercial district depends on this transportation network. The roadways work well most of the time, but some work poorly when we need them most. Through surveys, focus groups and our own experience, the City understands the impact traffic congestion has on everyday life. We have been working in several areas to address this challenge.

First, elected officials and staff have established sound working relationships with Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and Kane County Department of Transportation (KCDOT) personnel. This involvement allows us to communicate concerns so that corrective action can be taken. Also, Mayor Klinkhamer is the vice-chairman of the Kane County Council of Mayors, where Federal funding opportunities can be seized. These relationships also allow us to provide regular, constructive feedback so larger projects can get initiated.

City staff have also been working on roadway improvements, such as the widening of IL 64 from 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. to Dunham Road to accommodate turn lanes for safer access to the commercial driveways. It was initiated by our offer to fund the preliminary engineering. The project is delayed due to State budget issues, but it would not be in the State program if the City did not fund the engineering.

A third area staff has been working on is signal optimization on IL 64 through downtown. Two years ago, we began collecting data and shared it with IDOT to prove there was room for improvement. The signal system was re-timed and a measurable improvement documented. The signals still have difficulty clearing congestion based on: 1) the sheer volume of traffic on IL 64, IL 31 and IL 25, combined with the lack of turn lanes; and 2) anomalies in traffic movement, such as emergency vehicles or slow-turning trucks, that overload the system during peak hours. City staff continue to monitor the downtown signals weekly.

Finally, the City acquired all of the property and began engineering to build another Fox River crossing. The bridge will be near Red Gate Road. The new crossing will provide a vital transportation link between the east and west sides, improve fire and police response, ease congestion on IL 64, allow for more efficient school district transportation and connect our community at the north end.

In conclusion, we know we need to be vigilant and persistent to create any impact on traffic congestion. As the region grows, it will put a greater strain on the transportation system that is, in some instances, inadequate. We are committed to continuing to look at doing more in order to have an impact on traffic congestion in the future.

